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II. ASIA -AFRICA

Situation in Lebanon

Rebel units have resumed the offensive against government security forces in both northern and southern Lebanon, according to reports reaching Beirut. In Tripoli, security forces utilizing artillery claim to have destroyed the citadel which has been used by rebel forces as a command post, and the opposing forces have clashed outside the city. Government sources continue to expect a major rebel attack on the city in the near future

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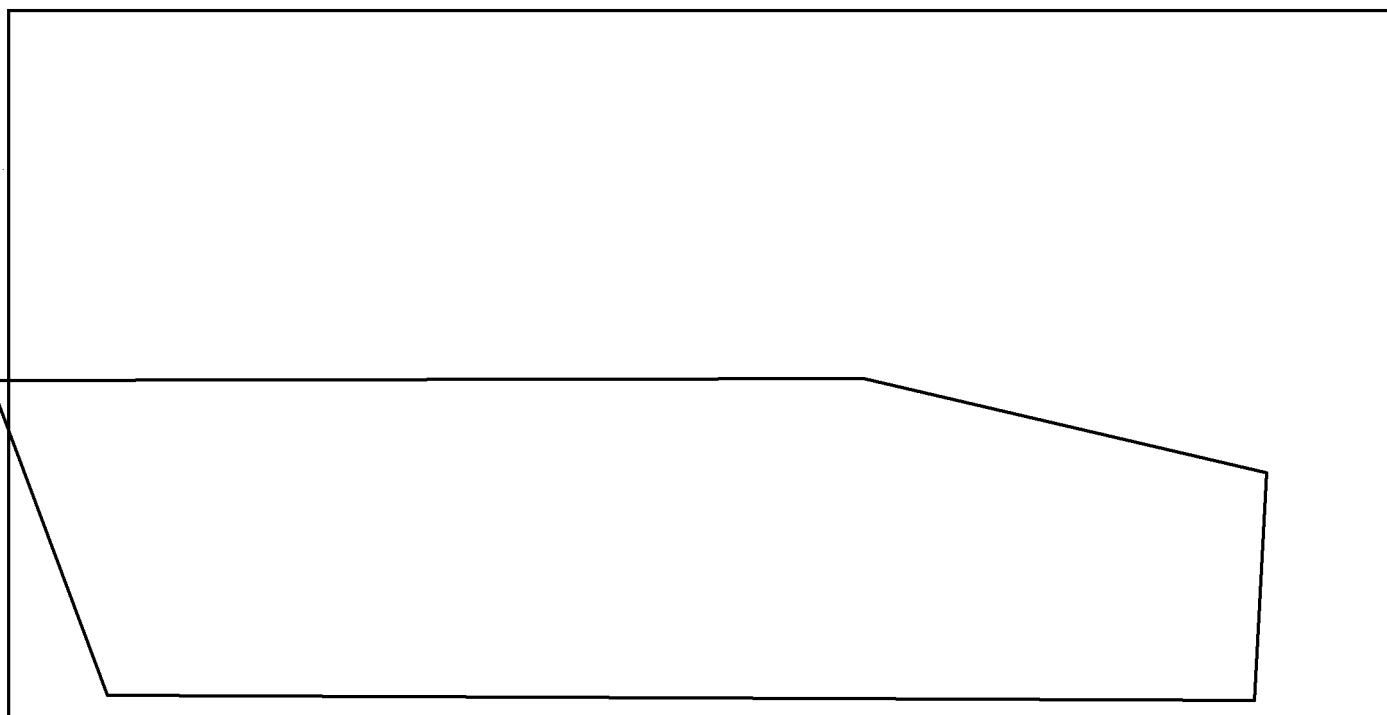
The political crisis shows some additional signs of being transformed into a confessional struggle. In an unprecedented action, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon--the nation's highest

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Moslem dignitary--and the Ulemas--the juridical leaders of the Sunni Moslem faith--"excommunicated" Prime Minister Sulh from their sect. Declaring "May the curse of Allah fall upon him," the Ulemas called upon Moslems to ostracize and disown Sulh. In retaliation, the government has suspended four of the judges of the supreme Moslem religious court who signed the decree, charging them with engaging in political matters and demonstrating against the government. This action will be interpreted by the Moslem masses as meaning that the struggle in Lebanon has assumed religious proportions, and will lessen Sulh's influence in Moslem circles, while increasing his popularity among the Christians.

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Arab Union Prime Minister Submits Resignation

Arab Union (AU) Prime Minister Nuri Said is attempting to increase pressure for a larger amount of Western financial aid to the new union and for stronger action by Britain to bring oil-rich Kuwait into the AU. The AU Treasury Ministry has drawn up a budget for presentation to the AU Parliament on 12 June showing an estimated deficit of \$18,592,000 for the nine months ending 31 March 1959, and the prime minister has submitted his resignation rather than present such a budget.

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AU financial officials envisage that the union will normally have a deficit of about \$21,000,000 annually. According to the American Embassy in Baghdad, the Iraqis clearly expect this shortfall to be made up by Kuwait. Nuri stated on 9 June that

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only two courses of action were open to Iraq: either demarcation of the Iraq-Kuwait boundary so that a considerable part of Kuwaiti oil-producing area would become Iraqi territory, or incorporation of Kuwait in the AU.

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Nasir May Institute Purge in Syrian Region of UAR

Resumption of attacks on UAR Vice President Hawrani and his followers by the semicontrolled Damascus press may presage a purge by Nasir of the Syrian regional government. The attacks are accompanied by a suggestion that Egyptians--"statesmen from the southern region"--be brought in.

Similar attacks, centering on an agrarian labor reform which Hawrani was sponsoring, occurred during Nasir's visit to the USSR. In the present instance, Hawrani's supporters among the regional government ministers are being criticized for their handling of the petroleum shortage which has developed since the fighting in Lebanon cut the normal supply routes for refined POL. A recent change in the Syrian customs tariff, which had been interpreted as aimed at bringing Syria's customs duties into line with those of Egypt, has also been criticized in Damascus and cited in press reports from Cairo as having irritated Nasir.

At the same time, Nasir's hatchet man in Syria, Interior Minister Sarraj, is being praised by the Damascus press for his statements urging further efforts to solve the POL situation. Sarraj and Hawrani, a demagogic political leader and theorist, have not gotten on well together in the Syrian regional government. Hawrani has been especially suspect since it appears that his Arab Socialist (Baath) party has not dissolved itself as was agreed when the UAR was formed last winter. Nasir almost certainly would like to eliminate any vestiges of independent followings which Syrian politicians have carried over into the UAR.

in addition to the political situation, Nasir may be concerned by reports of friction--possibly involving a shooting affray--between Egyptian and Syrian army officers.

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